

THE MEANING, VALUE, AND PURPOSE OF LIFE

By [Bob Hurt](#), Saturday, 23 August, 2003, Revised 3 April 2019

Over the years, I have asked many people of many ages from many walks of life to tell me what constitutes the **meaning, value, and purpose of life**. I have never received an answer that I consider even remotely close. I write this to summarize the correct answers and encourage you to share them.

The fact that parents, religious leaders, and school teachers do not teach these things to children testifies sadly about our society's failure to grasp and share fundamentals that all people should know and embrace. Many people seem to feel that (as one youth told me) "Thinking about the meaning, value, and purpose of life breaks my head." To them the answer includes anything and everything, too much to distill into a cogent answer. Well, now, perhaps you can shed a little light on the matter for them and alleviate that concern.

You should see this as because it helps a person, young or old, to have a foundation set of principles that motivate and guide his choices and behaviors. It helps them know why the pursuit of truth, beauty, and goodness have such paramount importance to their happiness and sense of spiritual worth. Ultimately a study of the issues relating to meaning, value, and purpose will take the truth seeker from fact (learning knowledge) through meaning (wisdom through philosophy), to religion (experiencing value).

When people become conscious of the noble reasons for their life, then they will gladly make the choices and engage in the struggles that lead them there. That, of course, will produce a better, more benign world on which all of humankind can live and thrive. These matters become irrelevant to the individual without worthy personal goals - noble ambitions to be, do, have, and produce in various areas of life. And now to the answers.

Intelligent youths normally hunger for truth and sense it as an experience.

You could make a positive difference in their lives by sharing these truths about life with them.

[Reality-Check Test](#) -

Give the fun, thought-provoking tests below to your students, friends, and family.

THE MEANING OF LIFE

The *meaning of life is its adaptability*. The adapting process constitutes what we normally consider as “life.” Your birth and your family gives you a hand of cards to play, so to speak, and you either play the hand according to the rules, declare "no game", or try to change the rules of the game. Your “hand” consists of the challenges and opportunities you face in daily living. As you learn the rules of family and society, and operate within them, you gain ability and power. Only the powerful can change the rules, and then only in some games. Most people can simply opt out of one game and choose a different one to play. So, from the beginning, you have a way to go in mastering the techniques of adapting - choosing your games and playing them so all concerned can win, particularly yourself. Learning to “play the game” is the process of adapting. That produces an interesting effect that makes life really worth living.

Curiously, a sane person of sincere intent and action will behave, to the impartial outside observer, like a servomechanism, or “servo,” for example the autopilot in an airplane. The pilot sets the servo autopilot on a course. The servo senses changes in the course caused by the wind, and sends correction commands to the airplane controls to keep the plane on course. How this relates to sane, sincere humans is that a child who makes an error will receive corrections by his parents, or he will correct his errors the hard way. For example, a child who touches a hot stove will receive feedback in the form of the pain from a burn that tells him he made a mistake. He will deduce from the experience the suicidal and stupid nature of touching the hot stove. The child will learn, and never touch a hot stove again.

A child's servomechanism, if in proper working order as established by the behavior and teaching of adults in the vicinity the child, will lead the child to *adapt* to circumstances so as to improve his quality of life. Pain, pleasure, and other forms of feedback will serve to help the child adapt, but nobler ideals and spiritual gratification should stimulate the enlightened and mature adult.

Thus, as one successfully adapts to the challenges and opportunities of life, one’s circumstances improve, enabling one to develop more personal power and accomplish more in the time available. That results in giving one

increased resources with which to accomplish even more. Adapting well makes life truly worth living.

THE VALUE OF LIFE

The *value of life is its progressability*. In all the process of adapting, you get better and better, if you feel sincere and determined about progressing. Only lack of intelligence will prevent the sincere, determined person from adapting well and progressing. Many people, failing to understand this key principle, do not adapt well, do not progress well, and therefore experience little value in living. They stagnate and do nothing. Or they engage in criminal or unethical behaviors that violate their goals and alienate their fellows who then begin to work at cross purposes. But, the fun thing about this is that no matter how badly life might have become for you, you can, from this moment, make it better, see it better, do it better, adapt to it better, think it better, and it WILL get better for you.

Anything that gets better as time goes by becomes a joy to experience, particularly if it never ends. And it will never end for you, an enlightened truth-seeker, because you have a destiny in eternity.

This means you have a choice: you either get busy living (progressing) or get busy dying (not progressing). Since we can live forever (the spaceship ride on this planet and beyond is optional), you could spend a long time doing nothing till you decide to get going in pursuit of your worthy, noble goals. Daily progress toward your worthy goals makes life worth living.

You might not notice yourself progressing, for two reasons:

- Cycles - People tend to progress in cycles that consist of spurts of achievement followed by periods of rest and regeneration to prepare for the next climb. Apparently these cycles never end. What drives people to engage the cycles? Curiosity. If it weren't for our curiosity as to how good things can become, we wouldn't enjoy life at all.
- Gradual growth - the adaptation and progress process takes time and changes often happen imperceptibly. That explains why "The fastest way to become a frog is to live loyally each day as a tadpole." As a tadpole you would not notice your frog legs replacing your tadpole tail.

THE PURPOSE OF LIFE

The *purpose of life is to develop a well-balanced and majestic personality.* That means to become as devoted as possible to the pursuit of truth, beauty, and goodness through expressions of love, mercy, and ministry to your fellows. Imagine achieving that ideal. Others who live and work around you will feel as though they operate in the presence of God. It will mean that you have grown spiritually through adapting and progressing to the point where your fellows have a hard time distinguishing between your character and their estimation of God's character. What an accomplishment! And yes, that, relatively speaking, lies within the possibilities of your future.

Everything and everyone outside of deity has its limits. But typically none of us comes even remotely close to reaching our limits of personality growth and spiritual power during our short lives on this world.

Nevertheless, even though your capacity for personal perfection limits you, you can be still become perfect within the limits of that capacity. Obviously, then, a *sincere and persistent* person can go farther toward the final limit of his capacity to perfect a well-balanced and unified personality.

Such development resembles working out with weights and exercise to build strength and endurance. When we practice a skill we become more expert at deploying the skill to increase accomplishments. In fact with continual practice in developing a skill, the part of the brain responsible for that skill actually becomes more massive. For example, the music center of the brain of a concert musician who practices classical music several hours every day typically grows to three times larger than a non-musician's brain music center. So, even the brain can bulk up with "muscles," so to speak.

As muscles grow, so does the capacity to do work with them. The fact that you have serious capacity limits in some areas of your life does not mean you have to live with them forever. You can change your capacity for the better by simply working out and exercising your character and personality "muscles." This will make you a better person. Nobody knows how much better he can become with sincere, intelligent striving.

The concept of balance means one must not go overboard on some characteristics and neglect others. One must spend adequate time and energy on each.

The concept of majesty implies a high degree of dignity, nobility, admirability, quality, and personal power, almost to the point of worthiness as a target of worship. One develops majesty through a process of self-mastery, such that one's behavior becomes guided by devotion to supreme values. That requires meditative thought, focus, planning, and practice - concentrated work. One develops impeccability - personal perfection to the extent one's capacity allows - by routine, frequent, and vigorous exercise, and then by conscious application of perfection principles to dealing with the problems and opportunities of living.

All of that implies that you understand the meaning and function of personality. That question also stumps people, so I deal with it in my article "What is Personality?" at <https://archive.org/details/WhatIsPersonality>.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Most of our world's 7 billion human inhabitants have a religious nature. They yearn to know and honor deity in some form or another. This does not constitute proof that God exists, but it does suggest that striving to become "like" God in one's ability to love and serve others can motivate one to grow spiritually. A quest to become like God and to do his will lies at the center of man's recognition of the nobility of the pursuits of truth, beauty, and goodness through love, mercy, and ministry.

In other words, striving to know and do God's will and to discover and demonstrate God's qualities motivates the individual to embrace a quest for the meaning, value, and purpose of life. God most certainly has a far greater, nobler, and more loving nature than people typically imagine. But, he does constitute the standard of personality excellence toward which most people aspire.

Understanding and embracing the meaning, value, and purpose of your life sets you on a bee line course to becoming like God. It better enables self-mastery, sincerity of motive, and loyalty to truth. By *living* a life in devotion to truth, beauty, and goodness, you adapt to life's challenges by following the lure of *ideals* rather than physical and emotional impulses.

By expressing your life through continual and unrestrained acts of love, mercy, and ministry to others, you become the very embodiment of the

concept of value. As such you become truly religious - devoted to supreme values. By seeking to balance and elevate the quality of your personality, you imbue yourself with the technical skills of selfhood to become a noble, humane, strong, and cosmically sane human being.

I like to summarize the challenge of enlightenment as "elevating the quality of our problems". All the above challenges have the necessary conquest of problems at their core. Without doubt, we prefer some problems to others. For example, struggling to find the best investment for \$100,000 constitutes a higher quality problem than struggling to keep from starving to death.

If you do not solve today's problems, they will haunt your every tomorrow and cause you to have even more problems. Then your worst problems will distract your attention. Only if you solve today's problems today and do it expertly, will you develop the opportunity to leave those problems in the dustbin of history, and prepare yourself for the greater challenge of the higher-quality problems of tomorrow.

Only by mastering such challenges day by day can you grow to the pinnacle of power-personality synthesis that enables you to become your soul. You must continually develop spiritual muscle in order to contend with the spiritual challenges in your eternal future.

THE REALITY-CHECK TEST

The Reality-Check Test follows this page. Administer it to individuals and groups in such a way as to provoke them to think and research in order to find the answers. The test consists of two parts, with identical questions for each. The student takes the first test without referring to any notes or other sources of help, and lasts only half an hour. The student takes the second test at home, allowing the student the opportunity to consult reference sources. The second test can take a day to two weeks. Copy the test forms and give them to people. Encourage them to write their answers to the questions. Discuss their answers with them, then give them the answers from this article for comparison.

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REALITY CHECK TEST #1 – In Classroom

Your Age: Your Name:

Instructions: This quick test presents 3 questions for you to answer on this form in the classroom. You should spend no more than 10 minutes answering each question and explaining your answer. Hand in this form when you have finished answering the questions. Write on the back if you need more room.

1. What is the meaning of life (explain your answer)?

2. What is the value of life (explain your answer)?

3. What is the purpose of life (explain your answer)?

REALITY CHECK TEST #2 – At Home

Your Age: Your Name:

Instructions: This quick test presents 3 questions for you to answer on this form at home. Return the answers within two weeks. You may consult any resource, including your parents, religious leaders, and encyclopedias for the answer, but please write the answers in your own words. If you need more room, you may write on the back or on additional sheets. Then, staple or clip the sheets together with this form on top, and hand it in.

1. What is the meaning of life (explain your answer)?

2. What is the value of life (explain your answer)?

3. What is the purpose of life (explain your answer)?